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ABSTRACT

The Phoenix Indian School, which served as a coeducational federal boarding school for American Indian students between 1891 and 1990, was partially excavated in 1995. Drawing upon written records, books, student recollections, and the school newspaper, this report summarizes what was learned from the excavation about life at the school. The first two chapters describe the founding and workings of the school, the process of historical archaeology, what is known about the city of Phoenix from archaeology, and what is known about the excavation site. The experiences of pupils and employees of the school between 1891 and 1925 were reconstructed in light of the school's goal of replacing students' Indian culture and values with those of the American mainstream. The third chapter, "The Lesson of Conformity," describes the military style discipline used to maintain control in the very large school community. Artifacts of this conformity include a steam whistle (to dictate "clock time") and uniforms. The fourth chapter, "The Lesson of Sanitation and Health Improvement," describes the state of health in Phoenix and the school at the turn of the century, the school hospital, and sanitation and health education. Related artifacts are medicine bottles, dishes, and toothbrushes. The fifth chapter, "The Lesson of Individual Initiative and Advancement," uses Coca-Cola bottles and signed toothbrushes to show the rewards of hard work and possessive individualism. The sixth chapter, "Toys and Life Lessons from Playing," shows that the toy artifacts found (dolls and marbles) reinforced lessons of how to behave in civilized society. The seventh chapter, "The Lesson of Resistance to Conformity," documents, through fetishes, effigies, and hand-made tools, the student

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experience of resisting school demands and remaining true to Native beliefs. The eighth chapter, "The Lesson in the Creation of a New Identity," discusses racism as a deterrent to assimilation, the breakdown of tribal provincialism, and the Indian school's creation of pan-Indianism. Contains 26 references and 26 photographs and figures. (SAS)

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